

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2129

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR KU

SUBJECT: KUWAIT'S FOREIGN POLICY - A TIGHTROPE PHILOSOPHY

1. THE FOLLOWING IS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL REPORTS AIMED AT DESCRIBING KUWAIT AND ITS POLICIES AS THEY AFFECT US INTERESTS. SUBSEQUENT REPORTS WILL DESCRIBE KUWAITI ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENERGY AND MONETARY PROBLEMS, DISCUSS THE EVOLVING US/KUWAITI MILITARY RELATIONSHIP, ASSESS PROBLEMS OF INTERNAL SECURITY AND STABILITY AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE FUTURE DIRECTION US POLICIES SHOULD TAKE TOWARDS KUWAIT AND THE RESOURCES REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THESE POLICIES OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. SUCH A REVIEW IS TIMELY SINCE KUWAIT HAS REACHED A LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE TO THE US AND WEST QUITE OUT OF PROPORTION TO ITS SIZE, AND IT WILL REMAIN A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN OUR CALCULATIONS AS LONG AS THE WORLD'S ENERGY AND MONEY PROBLEMS REMAIN ON CENTER STAGE. GEOGRAPHICALLY IT IS A KEY SEGMENT OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA'S VITALLY IMPORTANT OIL FIELDS. IT HAS THE SECOND LARGEST PROVEN PETROLEUM RESERVES IN THE WORLD, IS THE FOURTH LARGEST PETROLEUM EXPORTER AND MAY WELL BECOME ONE OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR GAS EXPORTERS. IT HAS SOPHISTICATED (IF STILL THINLY BASED) FINANCIAL AND INVESTMENT INSTITUTIONS FAR MORE ADVANCED THAN ANY OTHER IN THE ARAB WORLD. IT HAS A FREELY-ELECTED PARLIAMENT AND A FREE PRESS, QUOTED INTERNATIONALLY. IN THE ABSENCE SO FAR OF SAUDI ACTIVISM, IT REMAINS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ARAB STATE IN THE GULF.

2. SUMMARY: EVER SINCE ACHIEVING ITS INDEPENDENCE 14 YEARS AGO, THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE KUWAITIS HAS BEEN TO WALK A TIGHTROPE BETWEEN THE IMAGE THEY WANT THE WORLD TO HAVE OF THEM ("PROGRESSIVE") AND A COLD BLOODED PURSUIT OF THEIR FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS (PRESERVATION AND INCREASE OF NATIONAL WEALTH). CONCEIVED BY THEM AS THE ONLY FEASIBLE LINE OF DEFENSE FOR A TINY COUNTRY WITH NO MILITARY POWER AND HAVING LOST THE PROTECTION OF BRITAIN, THIS SCHIZOPHRENIC APPROACH TO THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS NOT SERVED THEM BADLY SO FAR ALTHOUGH THEIR LILLIPUTIAN OUTCRIES AGAINST THE WEST, ESPECIALLY THE US, OFTEN ANNOYS US AND THEIR

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PERMISSIVENESS TOWARD LEFTISTS IN GENERAL ANGERS KUWAIT'S MORE CONSERVATIVE NEIGHBORS. IF PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDEAST CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND RADICAL/REVOLUTIONARY ISSUES IN THE GULF AND ARABIAN PENINSULA REMAIN MANAGEABLE, WE SHOULD SEE EVOLVE A MORE POSITIVE KUWAITI PUBLIC POLICY TOWARD THE UNITED STATES, THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT COUNTRY IN KUWAIT'S FUTURE. TWO DECISIVE WAYS TO ENCOURAGE A MORE OPEN KUWAITI RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US WOULD BE THROUGH A VISIT TO KUWAIT BY SECRETARY KISSINGER AND

A VISIT TO THE US BY CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER JABER AL-AHMAD. END SUMMARY.

3. KUWAIT'S FOREIGN POLICY IS DETERMINED BY THE GEOPOLITICAL FACT THAT IT IS SMALL, VULNERABLE AND OF GREAT STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE. SINCE IT IS VALUABLE AND VULNERABLE, KUWAITIS BELIEVE THAT TO DEFEND THEMSELVES THEY MUST OFFER SOMETHING THAT MAKES KUWAIT AN AREA NECESSITY, IN THE MANNER OF A SWITZERLAND OR LEBANON. THE WAY IT PORTRAYS ITSELF TO ITS NEIGHBORS, ARAB BROTHERS AND POTENTIAL DISSIDENTS, OFTEN DISTURBS AND PUZZLES THE USG AND SOME OF KUWAIT'S MORE CONSERVATIVE NEIGHBORS. TO UNDERSTAND KUWAIT IS TO REALIZE THAT THE GOK HAS BOTH AN OVERT AND COVERT FOREIGN POLICY.

4. ITS OVERT FOREIGN POLICY IS TO PORTRAY KUWAIT AS A PROGRESSIVE STATE. THE LESS PALATABLE FORMS OF THIS "PROGRESSIVENESS" ARE A LEFTIST, ANTI-AMERICAN PRESS, SUPPORT FOR VARIOUS LIBERATION ORGANIZATIONS AND "THIRD WORLD" ISSUES AND, SEEMINGLY, A HARD LINE ON IMPACT ISSUES SUCH AS PETROLEUM PRODUCTION AND PRICING. THIS PUBLIC STANCE REACHES THE ABSURD WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF KUWAIT IN VARIOUS NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCES AND ITS SUPPORT OF SUCH ISSUES AS THE SIHANOUK CLAIM. THE GOK DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE SUBTLETIES OF SUCH ISSUES, VOTES STRAIGHT NON-ALIGNED, AND TENDS TO BE SUSPICIOUS AT USG CONCERN ABOUT SUCH "REMOTE" AREAS. OTHER POLICY ACTS TOWARDS THE SAME END, BUT MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE USG, ARE AID TO EGYPT AND JORDAN AND LOANS TO AND INVESTMENTS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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E5. BY PORTRAYING ITSELF IN THE VANGUARD OF PROGRESSIVE STATES, THE GOK BELIEVES IT IMMUNIZES ITSELF FROM RADICAL ACTIVITY ON THE THEORY THAT RADICAL GROUPS NEED KUWAIT'S LAISSEZ-FAIRE POLITICAL ARENA AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS AND ITS SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE. IT ALSO BELIEVES ITS AID TO EGYPT AND SYRIA WILL ACT AS A DETERRENT AGAINST IRAQI TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS. ITS CORRECT RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA SERVE THE SAME PURPOSE, ALTHOUGH THESE TWO STATES ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH KUWAIT'S OPEN DOOR TO RADICALISM. THE GOK'S OVERT FOREIGN POLICY IS, THEREFORE, A PROTECTIVE/DEFENSIVE ONE. IT IS, AT THE SAME TIME, SHORTSIGHTED AND GUTLESS -- A DELICATE TIGHTROPE ACT THAT LEAVES VIEWERS UNCOMFORTABLE AND KUWAIT WITH NO REAL FRIENDS WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN.

6. THUS, WHILE KUWAIT DOES DESIRE STRONG FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE US, IN KUWAITI EYES THEY MUST BE MAINTAINED IN AN ALMOST

CLANDESTINE MANNER. THE KUWAITIS KNOW THEY NEED THE UNITED STATES; AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE FEARFUL (NOT WITHOUT REASON) THAT THE US WILL NOT NECESSARILY COME TO THEIR DEFENSE IF THEY GET INTO TROUBLE WITH OTHERS STRONGER THAN THEMSELVES. BECAUSE OF THIS, THEY BECOME ALARMED WHENEVER US ACTIONS OR STATEMENTS APPEAR IN THEIR JUDGEMENT TO INCREASE THEIR VULNERABILITY. OUTWARDLY, KUWAIT MUST APPEAR TO TAKE A TOUGH STAND VIS-A-VIS THE USG TO MAINTAIN ITS PROGRESSIVE IMAGE AND SUPPORT ITS OTHER, INCOMPATIBLE, POLICY ACTIONS. THE USG OFTEN FINDS THIS "I'LL BE YOUR FRIEND IN PRIVATE" POLICY FRUSTRATING, BUT THE GOK BELIEVES THIS AND ITS OTHER ACTS ARE WHAT HAS KEPT KUWAIT ALIVE. AS AN EXPEDIENT, SHORT-TERM POLICY IT IS DIFFICULT TO ARGUE WITH. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE LONG TERM, I.E., WHAT HAPPENS IF RADICAL MOVEMENTS SPAWNED IN KUWAIT SUCCEED AND THEN TURN TO KUWAIT AS THEIR NEXT TARGET? OR IF THE GOK'S STAND ON RADICAL ISSUES GIVES IMPETUS TO AND A PLATFORM FOR INTERNAL RADICAL GROUPS?

7. BELOW THIS SURFACE CACOPHONY, THE KUWAITIS QUIETLY PURSUE THEIR REAL NATIONAL INTERESTS IN A HARD-HEADED AND REASONABLY SUBTLE STYLE. THEY LIKE AND CAN AFFORD TO PAY FOR THE BEST -- IN TECHNOLOGY, IN EDUCATION, IN MILITARY HARDWARE, IN CONSUMER GOODS,
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IN MONEY AND INVESTMENT MATTERS -- AND THEY KNOW THE BEST IS IN THE WEST, PARTICULARLY IN THE UNITED STATES. KUWAITI/US ACTIVITIES IN ALL THESE FIELDS HAVE INCREASED ENORMOUSLY IN RECENT YEARS, AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. SUCH HEAVY RELIANCE ON THE US, INEVITABLE AS IT IS IN THE MINDS OF RESPONSIBLE KUWAITIS, NEVERTHELESS MAKES THEM UNEASY. IN CONSEQUENCE, THEY ALSO PROBE RESTLESSLY IN THE SMALLER "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES IN SEARCH OF ANCHORS TO WINDWARD. IT REMAINS QUITE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT AS LONG AS ELITE KUWAITI POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY REMAINS AS IT IS -- BASICALLY ANTI-COMMUNIST -- ECONOMIC ADVENTURES WITH THE COMMUNIST WORLD, ESPECIALLY WITH THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE, WILL NEVER MAKE REAL INROADS ON THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE WEST.

8. AWARE THAT ITS TRADITIONAL THEORY OF SURVIVAL IS WEARING THIN, KUWAIT IS CAUTIOUSLY TREADING ON NEW AND MORE POSITIVE POLICY GROUNDS IN TWO CRITICAL AREAS. THE FIRST TREND IS VISIBLE IN THE FIELD OF GREATER COOPERATION AMONG THE ARAB STATES OF THE GULF, ALTHOUGH ITS ARROGANCE, ITS INDIFFERENCE TO REGIONAL DISSIDENT MOVEMENTS AND ITS RELUCTANCE TO CEDE TO SAUDI ARABIA ITS NATURAL POSITION AS NUMBER ONE ARAB POWER IN THE GULF, WILL HAMPER THIS POLICY. THE GOK BELIEVES THAT, POLITICALLY, IT IS MUCH IN ADVANCE OF OTHER GULF STATES. ITS FLAUNTING OF ITS DEMOCRACY DOES NOT ENDEAR IT TO THE MORE CONSERVATIVE REGIMES OF THE AREA. BAHRAIN, WITH ITS OWN FLEDGLING DEMOCRACY, IS ITS CLOSEST FRIEND.

9. UNTIL THE GOK REACHES A GREATER ACCOMMODATION WITH SAUDI

ARABIA, THERE IS NOT MUCH HOPE THAT ITS NEW POLICY WILL LEAD TO ANY REALLY EFFECTIVE GULF COOPERATION. HOWEVER, ITS AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR UNITY AND COORDINATION AMONG STATES IN THE GULF IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, A STEP THAT, HOPEFULLY, WILL RECEIVE IMPETUS DURING THE PLANNED VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA OF CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER JABER AL-AHMAD.

10. ONE OF THE STICKIER PROBLEMS IS THAT KUWAIT DOES NOT INCLUDE IRAQ, A GULF POWER ASPIRANT, IN ANY OF ITS GULF COORDINATION PLANS. WHETHER THIS OMISSION IS IN DEFERENCE TO IRAN OR WHETHER IT REFLECTS KUWAITI FEAR OF IRAQ, OR BOTH, IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE AT THIS POINT. THERE IS NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT KUWAIT WOULD BE QUICK TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO ANY GENUINE IRAQI EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. THE OBVIOUS WAY FOR IRAQ TO SHOW GOOD FAITH
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WOULD BE TO AGREE TO THE DEMARCATION OF THE BORDER BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

11. IN SPITE OF THE "ARAB" CHARACTER OF KUWAIT'S GULF ACTIVITIES, THE GOK DESIRES STRONG RELATIONS WITH IRAN. AN ABLE MEMBER OF THE FULING FAMILY SERVES AS AMBASSADOR (OTHER RULING FAMILY AMBASSADORS ARE IN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE US) AND KUWAIT FULLY REALIZES THAT IRAN IS ITS BEST PROTECTION AGAINST IRAQI IRREDENTISM. THE GOK HAS BEEN QUICK TO LAUD IRAN'S NEW ARAB INITIATIVES AND IS LESS CRITICAL THAN OTHER GULF STATES OF IRAN'S ACTIVITIES IN THE GULF AND ITS ARMS BUILD UP. NOTEWORTHY ALSO IS THE FACT THAT KUWAIT OIL POLICIES ARE OFTEN CLOSER TO THOSE OF IRAN THAN TO THOSE OF SAUDI ARABIA.

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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12. THE SECOND, MORE MEASURED TREND, RELATES TO KUWAIT'S TIES WITH THE US. ASSUMING CONTINUED GULF TRANQUILITY AND IMPROVED PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDEAST, THE DEFUSING OF SOME CURRENT RADICAL/PROGRESSIVE ISSUES AND PROGRESS AT REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING ON FUTURE OIL CONSUMER/PRODUCER RELATIONS, WE ARE LIKELY TO SEE EVOLVE A MORE POSITIVE KUWAITI FOREIGN POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE UNITED STATES. MORE OVERT DEPENDENCE ON THE USG FOR ARMS MODERNIZATION COULD SPEED CHANGE. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF A CLOSER PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENIOR US OFFICIALS AND THE CROWN PRINCE, IF ARRANGED, WOULD BE OF GREAT

VALUE IN IMPROVING BILATERAL RELATIONS EVEN IF, AS IS LIKELY, PROGRESS IS SLOW IN RESOLVING MAJOR INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS OF INTEREST AND IMPORTANCE TO KUWAIT.

13. MEANWHILE, INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE FORM OF MORE ACTIVE OPPOSITION WILL CAUSE THE GOK TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE OF THE DEMANDS OF THIS GROUP IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY. THE NEWLY ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON NEW FACES AND INTEREST IN CURRENT, MOSTLY SOCIAL ISSUES, IS A HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT. DEMANDS ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE NATIONALISTIC AND GULF-REGIONAL IN CHARACTER. THE GOK INCREASINGLY WILL HAVE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ON POLICIES AS THEY AFFECT KUWAIT'S REGIONAL POSITION.

14. OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS, BARRING A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN RESOLUTION OF THE ARAB/ISRAELI AND PRODUCER/CONSUMER DISPUTES, IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT KUWAIT TO CHANGE ITS BASIC STANCE ON "PROGRESSIVE AND THIRD-WORLD" ISSUES. WE ALSO PROBABLY CANNOT REALISTICALLY EXPECT MORE OVERT FRIENDSHIP TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES. IN OUR RELATIONS, THE GOK'S SHORTSIGHTEDNESS, WHETHER ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL, SHOULD BE CONSTANTLY STRESSED, RATHER THAN CURRENT "RIGHT OR WRONG" SUBTLETIES. ON EVERY OCCASION WE MUST DISCOURAGE THE KUWAITIS FROM PROVIDING A SAFEHAVEN FOR DISSIDENT MOVEMENTS BECAUSE OF REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS. WE PROBABLY SHOULD NOT BECOME ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN TRYING TO PATCH UP KUWAIT'S DIFFERENCES WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAQ. WE MUST REMAIN ALERT TO AREAS OF CONFLICT WITH THESE TWO COUNTRIES AND SEEK TO DIFFUSE THEM THROUGH JUDICIAL-SECRET

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CIOUS USE OF INFLUENTIAL CONTACTS. WE SHOULD UTILIZE THE GOK'S INFLUENCE WITH THE MODERATE PALESTINIANS TO OUR ADVANTAGE. WE CAN BEST ACCOMPLISH THIS BY KEEPING THE GOK ADVISED OF OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION AND SEEKING THEIR ADVICE ON SENSITIVE PALESTINIAN ISSUES. THROUGH OUR ECONOMIC AND MILITARY PROGRAMS WE SHOULD SEEK TO ENCOURAGE GREATER AREA COOPERATION, PERHAPS BY ENCOURAGING EXCHANGES OF EXPERIENCE AMONG GULF COUNTRIES IN ECONOMIC AND MILITARY FIELDS. TWO DECISIVE WAYS TO ENCOURAGE A MORE OPEN KUWAITI RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US WOULD BE THROUGH A VISIT TO KUWAIT BY SECRETARY KISSINGER AND A VISIT TO THE US BY CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER JABER AL-AHMAD. STOLTZFUS

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